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YOUNG FAUNESS
By Joseph Bernard

"THE
EMBRACE"

By
Joseph
Bernard



Example
of the
Modern
Art

Joseph Bernard—Spirit of Modern Art

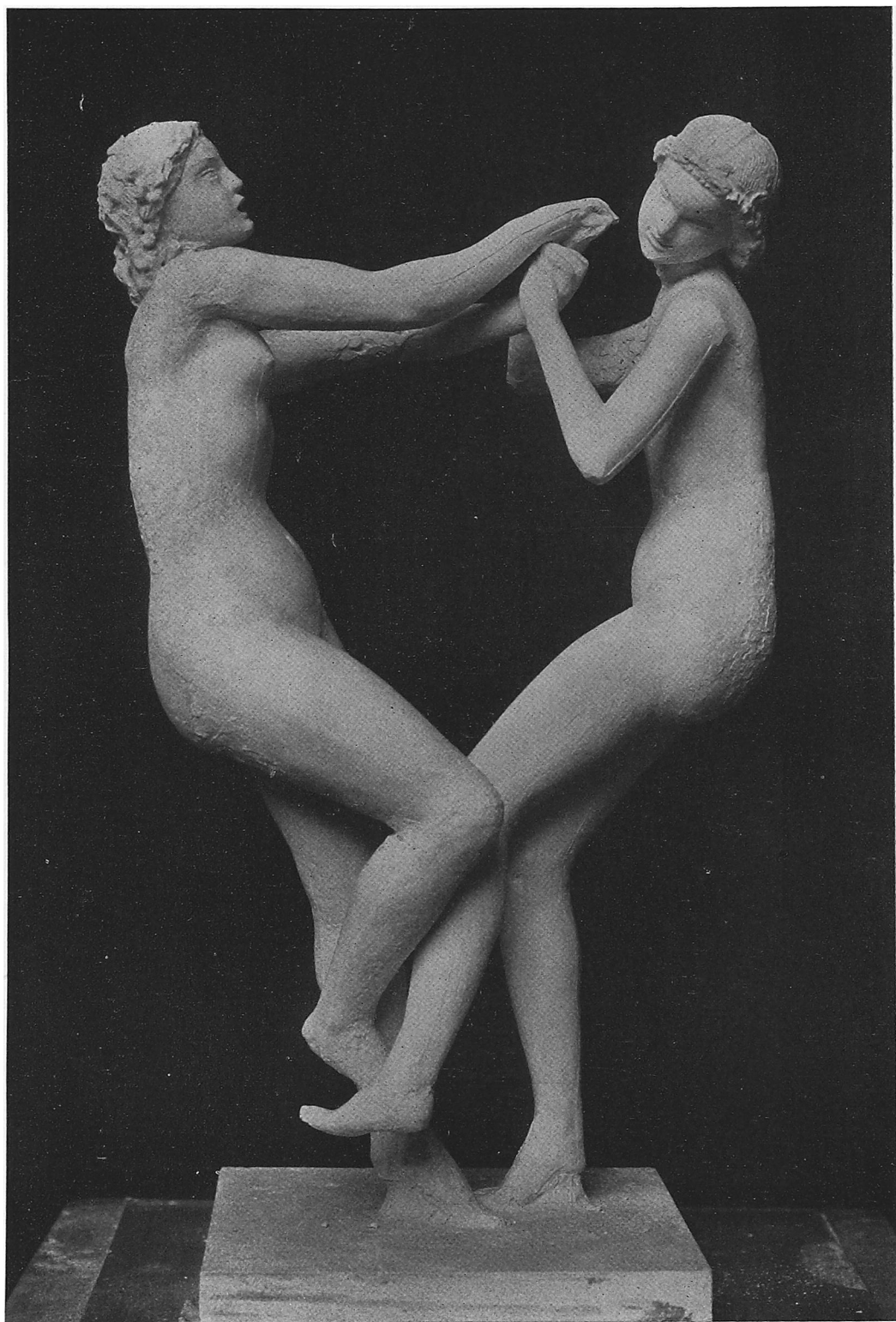
By WALLACE THOMPSON
(Paris Correspondent)

THE world is demanding, just now, an adequate expression of what the new movements in art are and what they mean. The language to tell it is not at the command of any of us who paint or carve or write, yet on us is the responsibility, for that these movements mean something is already granted, though what and how, must yet be explained. We know that the reason the vision is indistinct is that there is such a mass of worthless imitation and senseless raving clouding the sight of men. The line is so sharp and yet so dim, between the great and the little. We must all depend on feeling to guide us, and feeling is the essence of art, and artistic expression at the same time a development of the understanding.

To feel and to understand are the essentials, then, and yet the medium escapes us.

Infinite subtlety is demanded, and yet men ask to be led up to the only subtlety that can adequately express it, the subtlety of plastic art, by means of unsubtle words. The only efficient work on modern art covers a thousand quarto pages, and its five years of age almost place it on the back shelves! To the work, then, of the very few masters of the movement we must turn to understand it.

Out of the chaos of its growth stands one figure almost alone, that of Joseph Bernard, sculptor. He is new, very new. Only within two years has his modern art been seen in exhibitions, and yet he ranks today as the only eloquent exponent of what the movement means. Bernard is forty-six years old. He was born in the little city of Vienne, near Lyons, in the shadow of the Alps. Here stood once a



YOUNG GIRLS DANCING
By Joseph Bernard

Roman capital, called Pulchra, and the town is filled with plastic memories of the classic occupation. Bernard's father was a worker in stone, and the boy worked with him. As far back as 1878, when he was eleven, Bernard, ignorant of any intermediary means in the making of statues, tried to chisel an image in the native rock. Later he learned to model, and studied in Lyons and Paris. He became powerful in the classic-realistic school of his time. The official salon granted him medals and in 1898 placed him "hors concours." He worked with all the proper bumps and hollows, tricks and plays of light which marked the period. But always the memory of Vienne haunted him. He returned always, in thought, to the virgin stone, and worked in it at odd times, without clay or measurements, as he had done as a boy. He felt the need of modeling in the form itself and not on the surface.

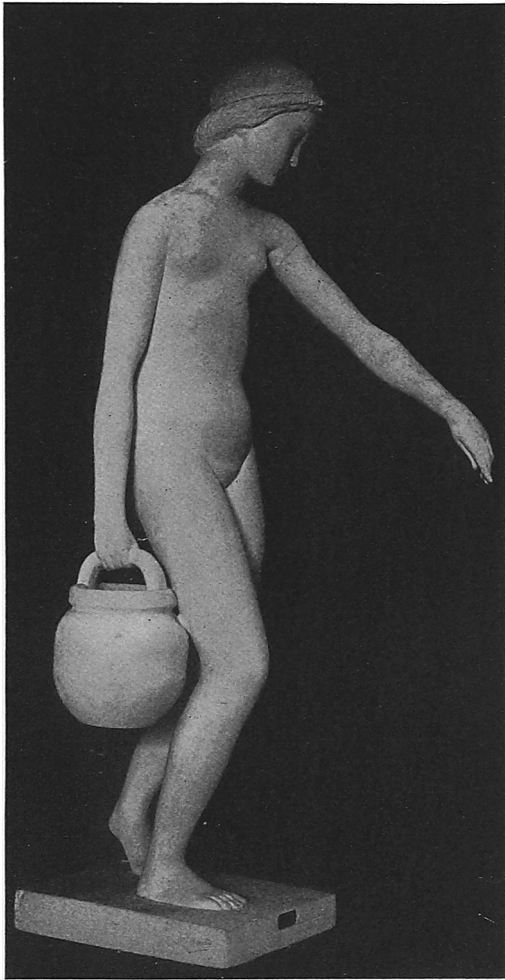
So after the salon of 1898 he dropped out of sight. He had his studio in the dingy Cité Falguière, where he still works, and there, surrounded as now only by impecunious students and little disturbed by outside influences, he began his search for a new beauty—the beauty sculpture had lost even more than painting, the beauty within the form, and not on the outside. He worked only in the stone itself.

In 1905 he began on his monument to Michel Servet, and in 1912 it was finished and erected in his native town, where that first great surgeon was martyred by Calvin. Vienne is a small place, else the erection of that statue might long since have precipitated a battle in the ranks of art. As it was, Bernard was left to work on. He exposed for the first time in ten years at the Autumn salon in 1910, and in the same salon a year later, showed portions of the Servet monument, and last year the full-sized reproduction of it, together with twenty studio works, in the great entrance hall of the salon.

Bernard is one of the simplest souls in

the galaxy of simplicity, which alone is crowned with the real laurels of artistic immortality. His dingy studio is littered with the paraphernalia of the workshop. He lives in the quietest of homes, sees virtually no one, talks but little, works fourteen hours every day of the whole round year, and his only pet is a white bantam rooster. Unpretentious to the degree of complete self-effacement, you are always astonished at the respect he commands in all who know him, from the proprietor of the pretentious art shop on the Rue Royale where his works are sold, to artists whose publicity extends to the edges of the world. He does not remember names and knows almost nothing of the events of the world. Bernard lives beauty, dreams it, and smiles quizzically, and unembarrassed out of those keen black eyes, no matter what befalls. If occasion arises, the strength of his massive personality is asserted in a single look, and the fabric of all danger collapses. He is a man of tremendous force, but a force that is not wasted in impressing itself upon the world of common things, but concentrated with all the might of a Michel Angelo on the work that is in hand.

The criticism of a modern artist is essentially a delicate operation, for the writer must perforce lead his readers on by the same simple paths which he himself has trod, ere the modern can be approached with intelligent emphasis. The age is escaping rapidly from the thrall of conventional schools, but even the best of the moderns have made long strides, and the lay, or even the too well trained artistic mind, must struggle bravely to advance with it. Thus the natural question of a comparison with Rodin, in the case of any sculptor, arises. This great artist really need not be brought in here otherwise, for Bernard's work and personality have never touched him. Both are supreme individualists, and will ever remain so. True it is that before Rodin sculpture had done but little to bridge the gulf that separated mod-



YOUNG GIRL WITH A JUG
By Joseph Bernard

ernity from antiquity—we have been making Renaissance statues dressed in military uniforms and frock coats steadily, while painting has gone through the deepest throes of its creative history. With Rodin sculpture began to express the present. But Rodin is an old man, and Bernard is just in his prime. Rodin talks with the language of the great impressionists. Bernard leads an army of new schools out of the wilderness of revolution. Rodin has thrown away classic tradition, all the immutable laws of forms, and has soared so high in his vast individualism that men

compare him in his solitary grandeur with Rembrandt. Bernard draws back to the pure laws of truth and art, creates things not seen, and pictures the singing spirit of the modern age with classic purity but modern strength and serenity. Rodin impresses by his mighty technique, his broad sweeping aside of all limits to his exaggeration, Bernard rises by the very simplicity of his harmonies, by the very subservience of the details Rodin ignores.

In Bernard's studio today you can see none of his earlier works. The oldest are the projects for a gigantic monument to "Peace" which he began shortly after he went into artistic seclusion. They hang high on the walls now, dust covered and undisturbed, mighty hands and heads, and one supreme, terrible face, which haunts the visitor more than anything else, for Bernard's things are not terrible now. This is the symbolic figure, War, now only a



SATYR (MARBLE SKETCH)
By Joseph Bernard

head, with a sword driven up to the hilt in the crown, while eyes so deep-set and dark they seem impregnated with the burden of the world, gaze lifeless out under a forehead low and awful.

The monument to Michel Servet was Bernard's first great work entirely carved direct in the stone. In the two of Vienne there remain two stone lions, carved direct also, by the youthful hand of the sculptor. They may be counted as his inspiration, the monument to Servet as the first achievement in his search for sensibility in the stone, for the soul of the medium which he believes to be the truest art in sculpture. It will stand as a landmark in art's search for beauty within, instead of upon the surface, a search that today permeates all art, painting, music, literature.

Up to this time, modern sculpture has lagged behind painting in another sense, moving further and further away from architectural laws. Ever since men began putting pictures into pediments instead of designs of figures in harmony with the building, the two have drifted apart. Bernard in this work has sought out lines which sustain the artistic conception, both allowing the eye to grasp easily the complete general aspect by eliminating tricks, hollows and shadow plays, and also emphasizing the calmness, the light and the carefully and judiciously established lines. He gives to his medium that serenity and sense of beautiful composition and grouping which evoke appreciation of his great decorative masses, pure lines and eloquent simplicity. He has sought an art eminently sculptural, which should lose nothing on contact with the open air, and should at the same time retain its sense of being stone, and not seek merely to represent the flesh in a strange medium.

To Bernard nothing is banal or low. The stone is as beautiful as the idea he would express. He works in the medium and with it, welding its soul to express his soul, as appreciative of what it means as of what

he would say. Since the end of the Renaissance, almost, men have sought only to copy the model. Bernard seeks to interpret it, and to do so in the language of his medium, using its beauties and its limitations to express his own, feeling the stone in his every conception of his subject.

Bernard, literally born a sculptor, had these ideas inculcated before he was poisoned with the creeds of the schools. He had a precise conception of volumes and harmonies before he knew what they meant, and he retained them through all the stress of his student days. Form was always a musical rhythm, nothing else. His faith in beauty was always as simple as a child's in God, and no matter what was taught him, he always sought in everything a clear, strong chord to express his ideals of beauty in the absolute. His appreciation of decorative masses is Gothic in suggestion, placing him in a logical harmony of sympathetic equilibrium. He has never been afraid of perfect harmonies, harmonies so simple and primitive that one is likely to overlook the audacity of their very simplicity.

Who but Bernard would dare make two dancing figures into the form of a Lyre, as in the study shown here? Who else would narrow his base with feet "toed in" in that deliciously human fashion? And note his hands, the outstretched balancing member of "Girl with the Jug," in all its Gothic simplicity and all its supremely modern understanding. See the closed fingers and the flat gentleness of the caress of that male hand on the back of the female in that chaste "Embrace." Rodin could never have whispered the tenderness of that gesture, the perfect keynote of a work that it seems must some day come into its own as supreme.

The rage of the present art movements is to "express the life of our time," and from the Futurists who do it with the sensation of sign boards and the clatter of city streets to the fashionable portraitists

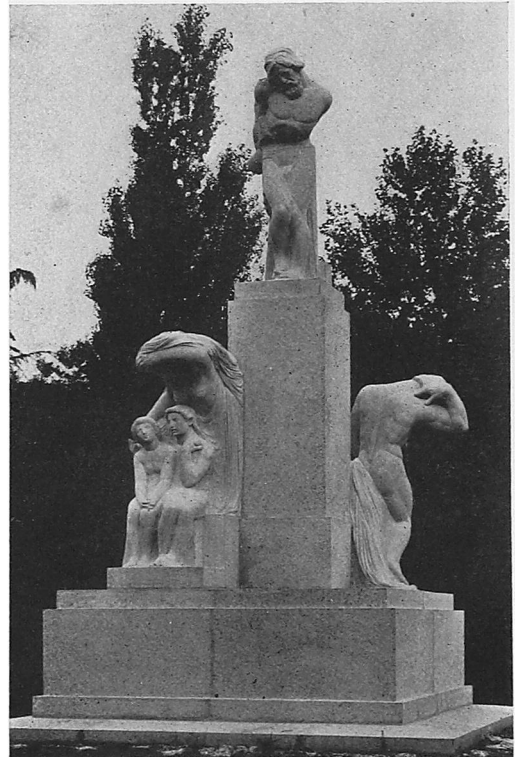


IMMORTAL SONGS
By Joseph Bernard

who do it in the banal conception of the most artificial society the world has yet known, all are representing the surface characteristics with which we are so familiar. Bernard held himself no less a modern, but as he goes beneath the surface of the stone for his modeling, so he goes beneath the surface of our modern life to present it. He shows us our finer selves, as Walt Whitman has shown us in poetry not even the most captious can call unmodern. Bernard touches those deep wells of sentiment and warmth and intimate loveliness which are after all our truest characteristic. We moderns look out of our quiet homes on the hurrying world, and wonder at it, while it glows within us with all its uncertainties and its vibrating mightinesses, but we forget that all the others perhaps have the same warm humanness as ourselves, when they are alone, and in representing the soul of the time, we would show something that is not our soul, but what we imagine the soul of the busy

life we see about us would be. But are we not wrong? And are not all the others as quiet and serene and appreciative as we are?

Bernard would teach us that they are. He knows himself, and knowing himself knows the heart of the world. He tells us just what is within him, and it sings aloud with verity. The essence of the best in the world today is surely Joyous Work, and Bernard is one of the happiest workers living. In no single one of his statues do you feel the jangle of frazzled nerves. In not one do you sense a feeling of discord with the world as it is. The works of this artist sing reassurance, promising all the lovely things we long for, down in our souls, make us sure that the world is right, and that nothing, not even its destruction, can harm the least of us. Bernard gives the world what it needs most, and surely



MONUMENT TO MICHAEL SERVET
AT VIENNE, FRANCE By Joseph Bernard

nothing can be more in harmony, more understanding of its spirit than that.

In this matter of interpretation too much cannot be said. The monument to Michel Servet interprets to us just what the martyrdom of the man means. The figure on the summit is both the great surgeon, credited with the first discovery of the circulation of the blood and martyred for his assertion of it, and the bearer of the whole cross of humanity's disgraced ideals. It is a figure as colossal as its concept, as inspiring as its suffering. The story is told with all the purity and directness of complete understanding. It is obviously an interpretation. The whole pose of the body is suffering, but it writhes in perfect repose. You neither writhe nor weep. More deeply for that do you feel the message that this martyr to your humanity and your free knowledge sends to you down the ages. You long for Bernard to make a Christ, a Christ who will tell this age what Christ means to it!

The group in the front of the pedestal represents fame telling youth the story of the martyr. It is completely symbolic, and the last vestige of personality is eliminated. The girl sits rapt, but slightly intense, listening, seeing the beauty and the poetry in the story. The boy is tense, self-consciousness lost, while the muscles move in the flexed arm, inspired to mightier things. At the back is the symbolic figure of Remorse, bowed down by the weight of its sin—take the pose of that powerful, broad gesture of the arm—remorse for you cannot say what sweeps over you—that is what the significance of gesture means!

The harmonious lines, the supreme simplicity of the composition of this monument have been suggested before. Draperies, straight lines of stone, the porous granite itself in which it is hewn, all combine to make it epoch-marking.

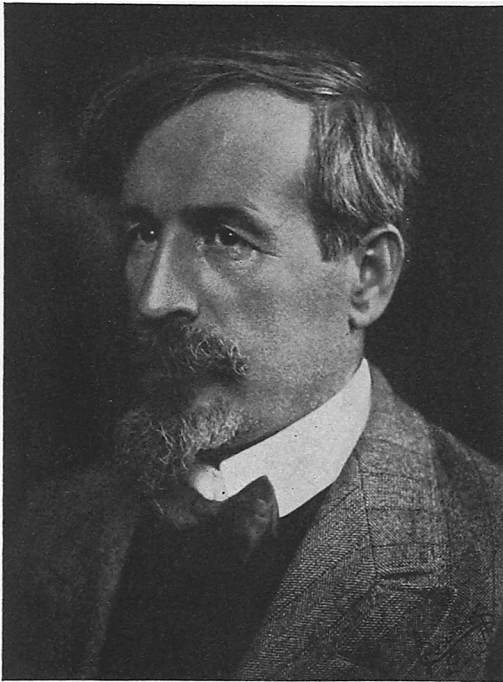
Turning to the marbles shown here, it is interesting to note that this stone has been chosen only for those subjects wherein its

velvety structure enters fittingly. The lovely group of the "Embrace," carved from the hard marble direct, is the type. Simple, serene, quiet, free from all suggestion of passion, chaste as the virgin stone, but eloquent with the supreme tenderness which the world needs so much. You feel that the story surges out of the stone, here, perhaps more than in the other works in marble, and yet that delicate hand of the man, and the softening, yet finished shadows of the twining heads and shoulders make it almost supreme.

Another marble which has all the charm and spirit of a complete conception is the "Young Fauness," a statuette that has also been reproduced life-size in the porous granite, though with less harmonious effect. Here is a quizzical, self-contained little sprite, from her pigeon-toed feet to her turned-up elbow. This is one of the happiest works from Bernard's chisel, for it tells all one would like to know about happy people—it is the sort of thing you would love to have on your table, to look at on dull days. The very smile of it would make you smile, for it is of the sort that would never be hated.

This statue shows a characteristic of Bernard which has been criticised almost as much as Rodin was for his rough masses when first he used them. This is the heaviness of the lower half of the legs. But eliminate that, and the conception is changed. Here is this statue of solidity, firmly set and yet beautifully composed. The pedestal must be there and once more, Bernard is not making portraits, but interpreting ideas.

The "Immortal Songs" is another marble in which one feels instinctively the modeling beneath the surface, which in others is sensed rather than perceived. The song floats out of that mouth, with all the poetry of understanding. Like all his works, expression is exalted, lifted high, but never carried beyond the point of truthful inter-



JOSEPH BERNARD

pretation—oh, what things Bernard can say to you!

The "Satyr" is another emphasis of Bernard's daring in his simplicity. Such a sketch never yet told so much of cynical serenity in such simple planes, nor were blank eyes ever so expressive, or lips so real. It is all hidden in the untouched stone behind the mask, and yet it comes through it and out to you.

The plaster sketch of the two dancing figures is part of the dancing series which is to be exposed in a "Temple to the Dance" which is to be the chief feature of the Autumn salon of this year. Here is all the supremacy of action in repose which is so astounding in this artist. No human dancing body, in single poses, could ever tell so much of the joy of the dance. But here the simplified lines, the sensitive modeling of every line in both bodies and faces, have told volumes of the joy of movement, the play of muscles, of the idea within as well as on the surface. Float into the spirit of

it—interpretation opens vistas of enjoyment undreamed of in those who have known only representation in their code of art. And Bernard is the supreme teacher of it today.

The dance is a favorite subject with Bernard. He has two other models prepared for the series when he is ready to begin it, and at the moment he is engaged on a marble frieze of the dance, two feet high, for the fireplace of an art lover of Paris. It is growing in the native stone, outlined with penciled lines, but worked without clay models, and from a water color sketch that has been changed in idea since it was finished. It is an expressive representation of Bernard's method of work, wherein the idea grows only in his busy mind, until it is drawn out of the rock.

The last illustration to be noted is the inimitable "Young Girl with the Jug." This was exposed in New York, at the International Exhibition, one of the ten shows where Bernard's works are on view at this writing. Its simplicity of line, its beauty of modeling, its rhythm in the play of muscles, and of the sentiment in the action, make it perhaps his most representative work. The pose of that out-stretched hand, and the simplicity of the hand and the fingers is one of the most beautiful things in contemporary art. The turn of the feet, and of the legs above them, are as eloquent as the arm and body of the strain of the movement, but the modeling is all within, and not a hollow or a bump on the surface! The whole thing is in repose and perfectly reposeful, and yet it is action, to the very turn of the heels. Yet serenity, calmness, intensity!

Think of the statuettes of goddesses and fairies in your home, things you never look at. Would you ever get as tired of this "Jeune Fille à la Cruche" carrying her little burden so harmoniously? Just as you would like to believe you will some day carry your own burden of life along the road that is yours?